

# Severnaks - Bomb outrage

BURN GYPSIES OUT !

Unremitting aggression and hostility from settled people creates apprehension, insecurity and sometimes social disintegration among Gypsy families. Imposed upon them is a death-wish expressed time and again, often enough in mild terms - sometimes in horrifying ways. It is as if travelling and Gypsy folk had been cursed by settled society and must be treated with a special taboo. Whenever the door is closed in the face of a travelling woman, whenever children are refused water, the death-wish is there.

On a quiet lane in Kent a solitary caravan stood by the roadside. Two dogs strained now and again at their ropes on the drawbar. Some chickens roosted in a make-shift run. Inside Gypsy mother, Rachael King lay half awake on the wide bed under the back window her baby, 18-month-old Derby, asleep in her arms. Her small boys, Henry, five, and Jasper, eight, sprawled out asleep by her side.

Husband Ephram was sitting over by the stove methodically rolling himself a cigarette. Almost one o'clock in the night it was when his attention was awakened by a car coming up the road. The lights spread momentarily across the windows. Then everything was silent.

And suddenly without warning came the smash of glass on the road outside and an exploding flash of flame. As Ephram got to his feet the back window shattered and the bed was a mass of fire. Mother and children were screaming among the blazing bedclothes.

A third petrol bomb exploded under the trailer as Ephram swung open the door, bundling the terrified children out into the cold night air. He saw a Ford Anglia pulling on up the road.

This was the scene at Brasped Road, near Sevenoaks, when youths made a petrol bomb attack in the first hour of Saturday morning (June 15).

~~THEIR~~ What can have motivated this unprovoked violent attack on a peaceful family but blind prejudice against a couple and their six children the arsonists had never met.

It was not the first incident of harassment, official and unofficial in the Sevenoaks area. A couple of years ago, Sevenoaks RDC were pitting themselves against families who traditionally camp on the rambling, wooded Hosey Common. After skirmishes and legal action, the council decided to provide a regular site for twelve families at Edenbridge.

The enlightened change of policy, however, did not solve the problem. Where has always been an overflow. Up to 70 families had used Hosey Common and relations of those on the new Edenbridge camp felt themselves equally entitled to the comparative comfort and security of a council-run caravan park. A sub-committee of the council has battled hopelessly with the situation.

Then the burden was increased when the neighbouring London Borough of Bromley astutely expelled some 40 families who were on their waiting list. Many flowed inevitably into Sevenoaks.

Then persons unknown decided to take matters into their own hands. They put into action the death-wish many had uttered or thought : "Burn the Gypsies out."

Three petrol bombs, prepared with hate and contempt for human life, almost brought that wish into ghastly reality. Rachael and her baby Derby were badly burned across the legs and taken to hospital in an ambulance. Police took away charred bed covers and carpet.

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